

Workshopping approaches to building improvement infrastructure across the P- 20 pipeline UCEA- San Juan, Puerto Rico

Saturday, Nov 22, 2025 1:20 to 2:30pm,

Matthew T. Missias PhD, Grand Valley State University
Kristen C. Wilcox PhD, University at Albany



Objective and Agenda

Objective: How to use continuous improvement (CI) processes and tools—specifically empathy and ecosystem maps- to support P-20 partnerships.

- Introducing P-20 equity issues
 - Engaging with equity-focused problems of practice (POPs)
 - Diving into continuous improvement processes and tools
 - Sharing and reflecting on learning
-






Who we are: Matt



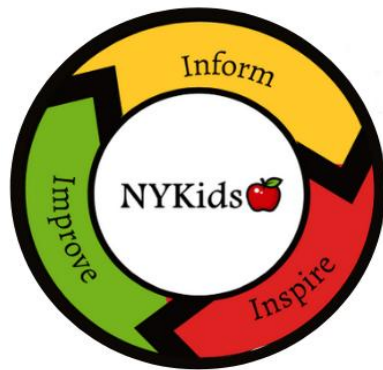
BY THE NUMBERS

DIVISION OF K-12 EDUCATION
INNOVATION AND SCHOLAR SUCCESS

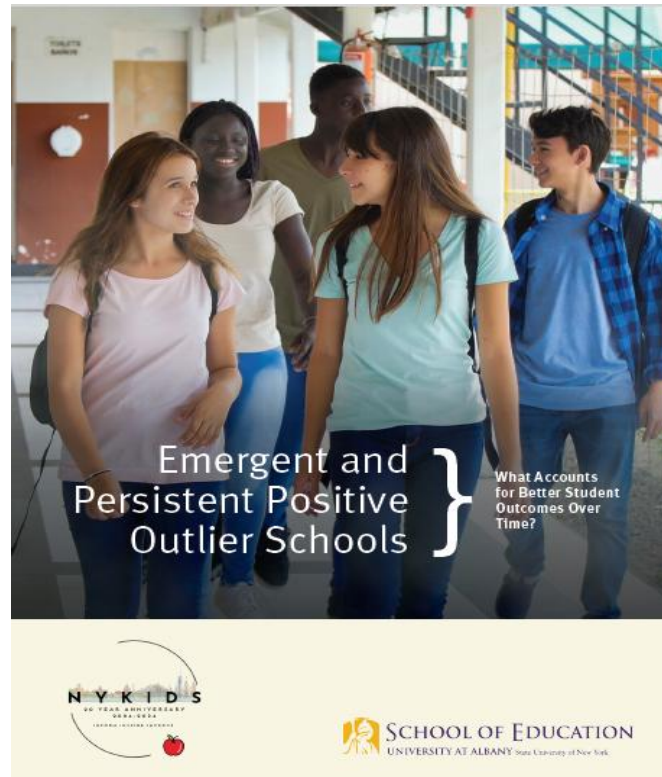
SEPTEMBER 2025

	SCHOOLS	78 GVSU-authorized charter public schools	25 Schools offered high school grades	9 Schools offered alternative education	2 Cyber schools	30 Years of authorizing charter public schools
	SCHOOL GOVERNANCE	58 Charter school boards	285 Charter school board members	476 Board meetings attended in 2024-25	5,263 Compliance items collected in 2024-25	99% compliance items submitted on time (to date)
	K-12 STUDENTS	33,000+ K-12 students enrolled in GVSU charter schools	77% of students qualified for FRL programs	13% of students received special education services	\$292K awarded to Charter Scholars at GV in 2024-25	1,411 2025 grads from GVSU charter high schools
	SCHOLARS ON CAMPUS	1,225 Thompson Scholars enrolled at GVSU (2024-25)	390 Charter Scholars enrolled at GVSU (Fall 2025)	30,000 hours of community service completed by Scholars	\$6.3M awarded in scholarships to Scholars (2024-25)	40% of all 2025 grads from GVSU charter high schools admitted to GVSU
	CSO EDUCATOR SUPPORT	\$753K Awarded via Continuing Ed. Scholarship in 2024-25	156 Educators received Continuing Ed. Scholarship in 2024-25	\$108K Awarded via Clinical Field Experience Scholarship in 2024-25	15 GVSU undergrads received Clinical Field Experience Scholarship in 2024-25	5 Educators utilizing alternative certification scholarship pilot

Who we are: Kristen



<https://ny-kids.org/>



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Equity Issues across P-20



Challenges in Collaboration



Improvement Research in Education (IRE)



Participatory Engagement



Collaboration Benefits



Power Relations and Expertise



Equity Champions

Improvement Science and Problems of Practice

Problem of Practice:

a persistent, and specific problem experienced by practicing professional educators, the addressing of which has the potential to result in improved understanding, experience, and outcomes.

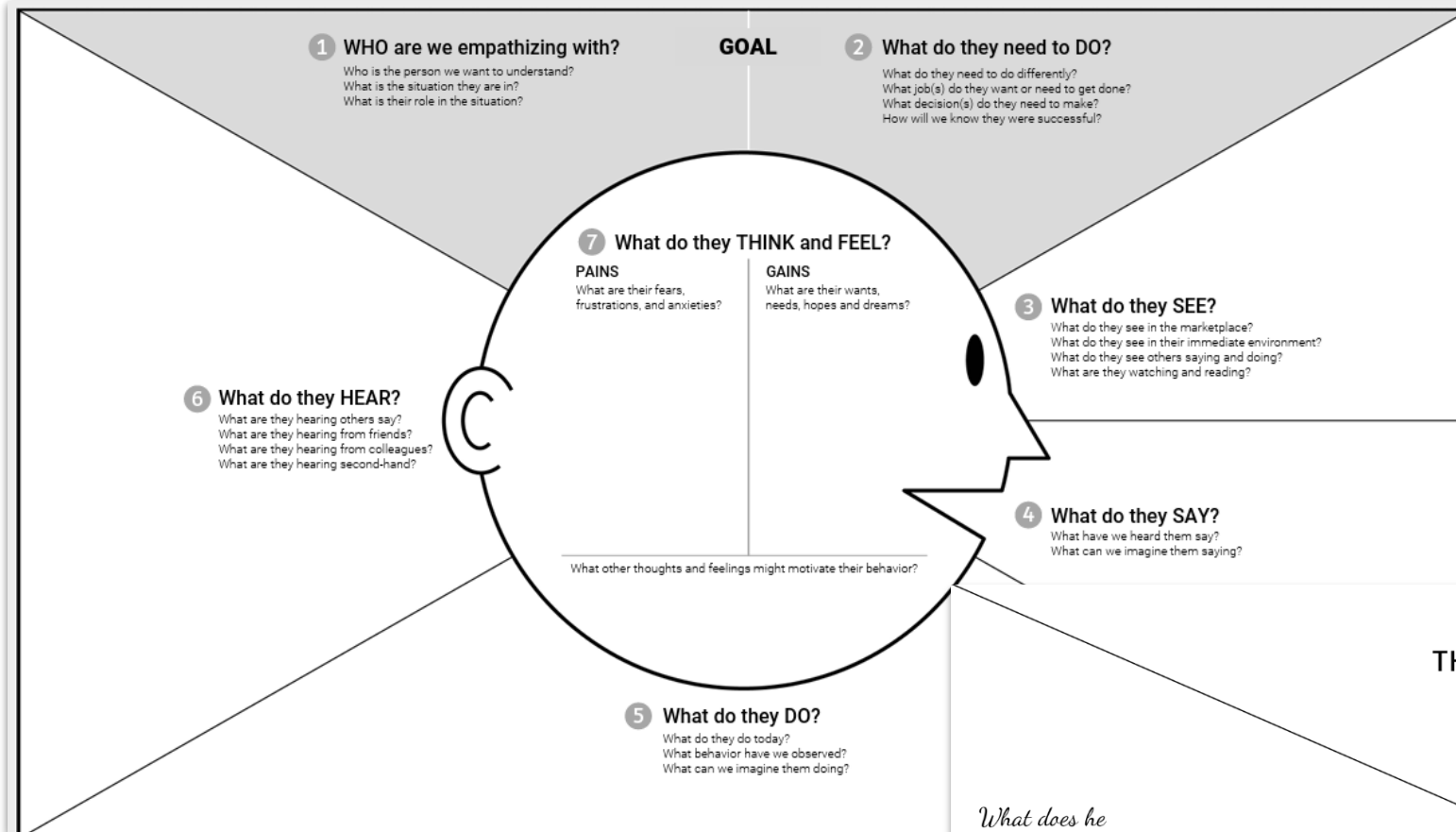




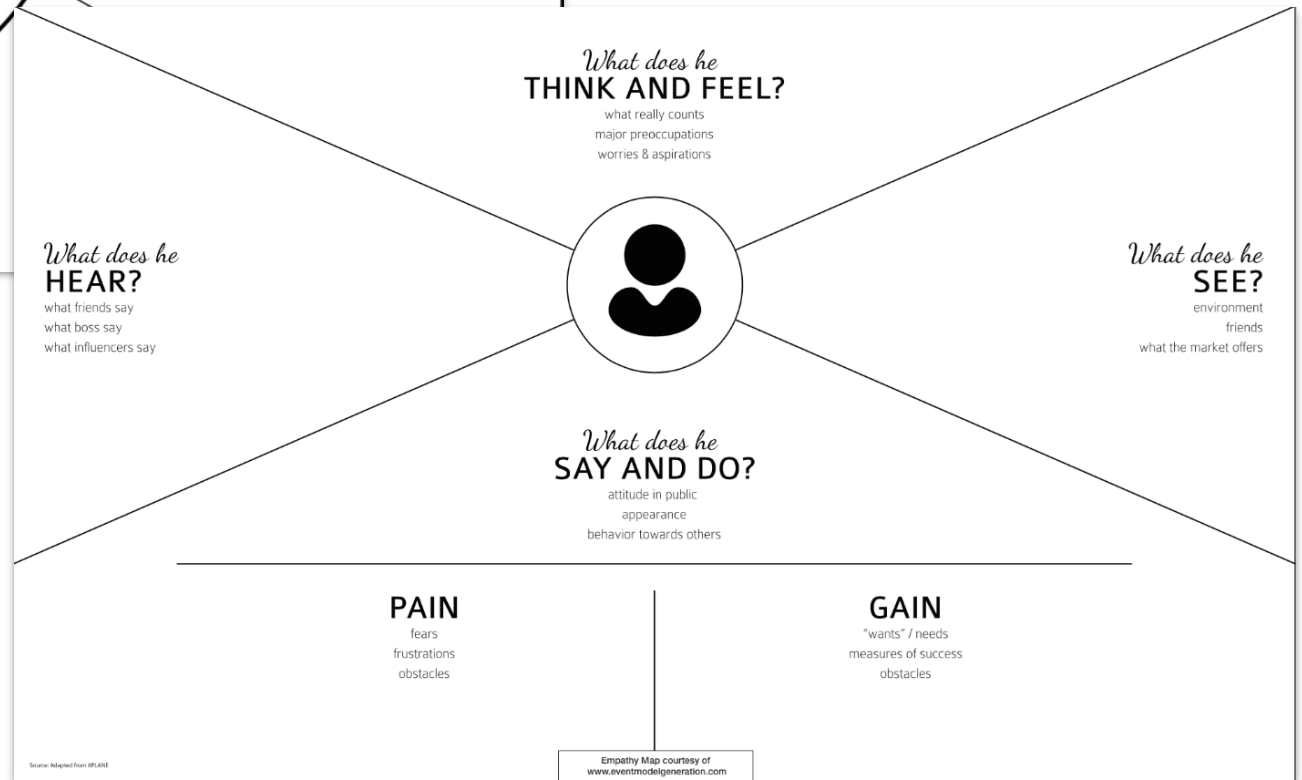
Empathy Mapping

Step 1: Individual note-taking

- 1) What are some equity-focused problems of practice you have encountered or been focused on recently?
- 2) What have you done to address or study these problems of practice?
- 3) What challenges have you encountered in addressing or studying these problems of practice?



Empathy maps
come in
different shapes
and sizes!





Using Empathy Mapping

Step 2: Identify at least one person with a different color post it note (P12 or HE).

Step 3: Now with your “other color” post-it note partner - engage in using the empathy map protocol taking turns with P12 or HE leading questions. Use the empathy map tool and allow 5 minutes each.

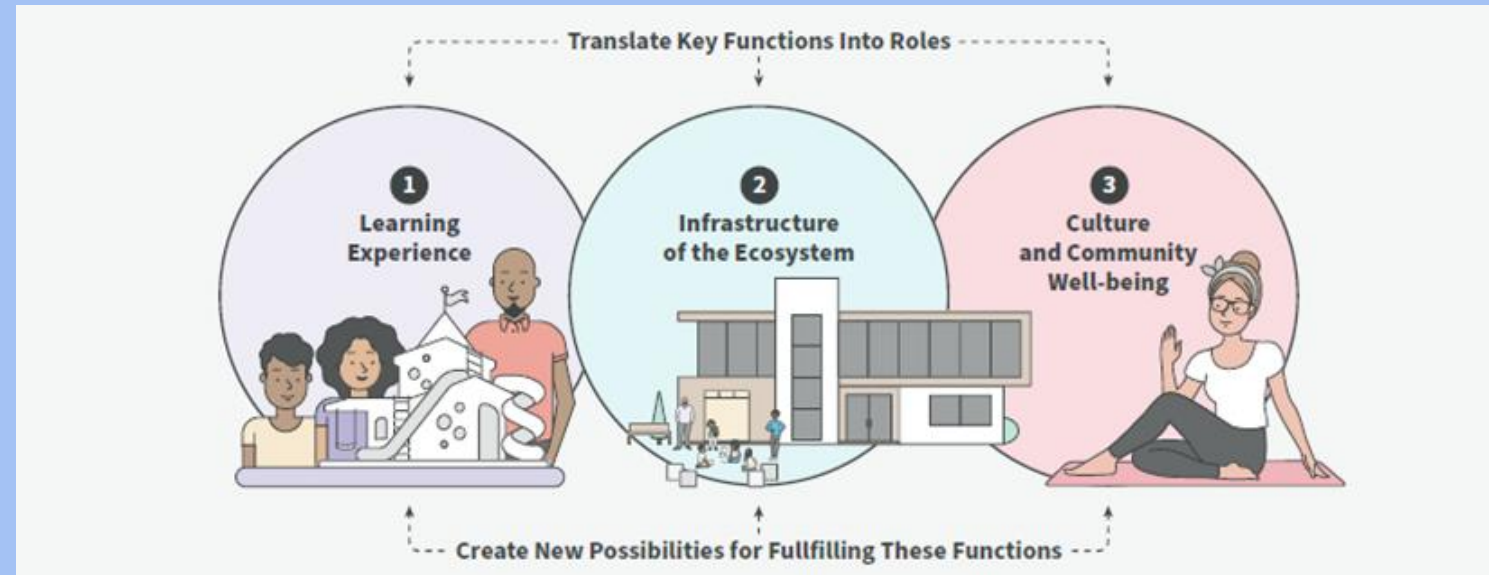
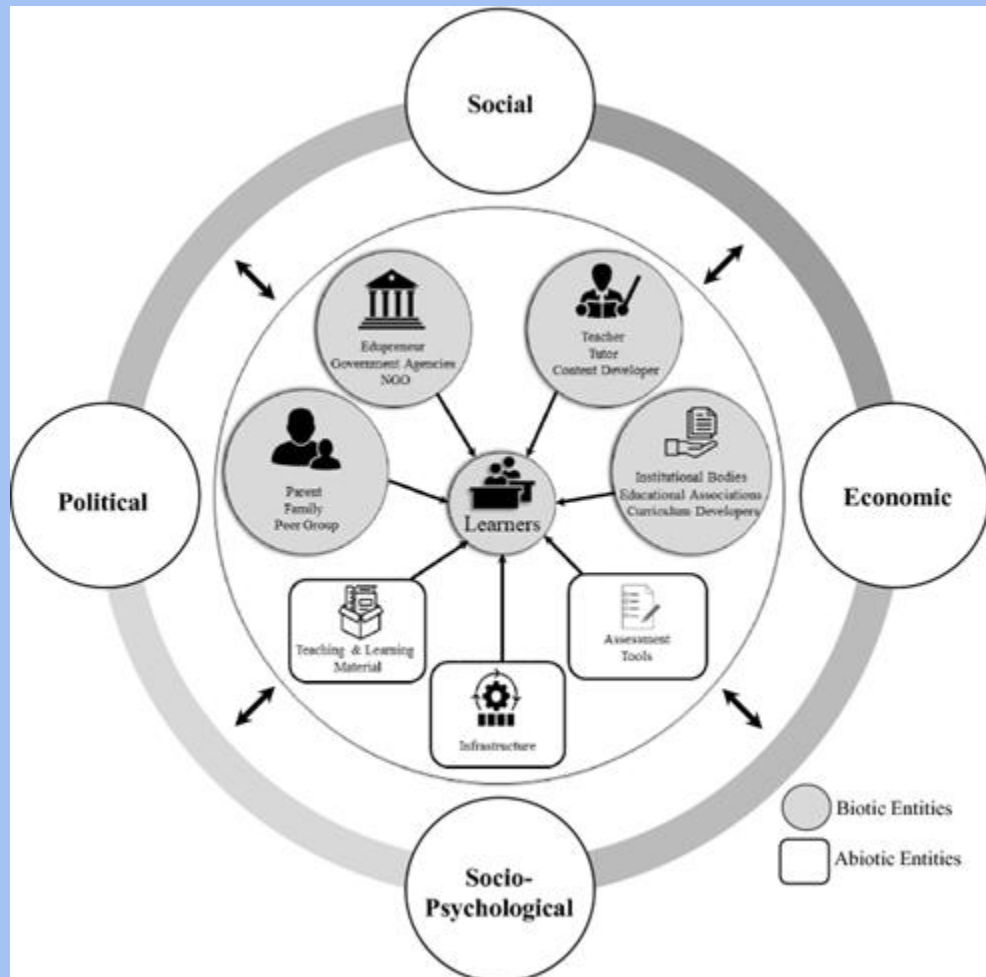
1. Please tell me about how you responded to the questions.
2. What thoughts or feelings come to mind in relation to your responses to the questions (ie. “pains and gains”)?
3. How might collaborating with a P-12 (if HE) or HE (if P-12) partner might support you in addressing or studying this problem of practice?



Debrief on Empathy Mapping

- What did you discover as you engaged in using this protocol about how your P-12 or HE peer is addressing or studying problems of practice?
 - What do you see as the benefits of using such a protocol with those with whom you collaborate?
 - What did you learn about how P-12 and HE improvers might help each other address challenges in addressing and studying problems of practice?
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Ecosystem Mapping



- Modern Educational Ecosystem (Bandyopadhyay, S. et al (2021))
- Domains and Key Functions of Thriving Ecosystems (Martinez Calvit, Education Reimagined (2023))

Ecosystem Mapping Worksheet



Phase 1: Identifying the Actors

Map the key
stakeholders and
entities in your
ecosystem

- Who are the individuals, organizations, groups, and institutions involved in or affected by this issue?
- Consider These Categories:
 - Students, families, and community members
 - P-12 schools, districts, and educational organizations
 - Higher education institutions and personnel
 - Community-based organizations and nonprofits
 - Government agencies and policymakers
 - Businesses and workforce partners
 - Informal networks and grassroots groups

Phase 2: Identifying Relationships

Understand how
actors currently
interact and connect

- What are the existing relationships, interactions, and flows between the actors you identified?
- Types of Relationships to Explore:
 - Formal partnerships and collaborations
 - Resource flows (funding, materials, expertise)
 - Information and communication pathways
 - Power dynamics and decision-making authority
 - Historical relationships and trust levels
 - Gaps, conflicts, or tensions between actors
 - Redundancies or overlapping efforts

Phase 3: Developing Connections

Identify opportunities
for new partnerships
and actions

- What new or strengthened connections could create opportunities for greater impact and equity?
- Questions to Guide Your Thinking:
 - Which actors should be connected but currently aren't?
 - What leverage points could amplify positive change?
 - How can power dynamics be more equitably distributed?
 - What resources or expertise could be better shared?
 - Which community voices need to be centered?
 - What quick wins could build momentum?
 - What systemic barriers need to be addressed?

Phase 4: Ecosystem Mapping

Use this template to identify the people, organizations, and communities in your ecosystem and visualize how they are interconnected. Copy and paste the elements below to build your map on the right.

- **First, use the nodes to identify all the stakeholders in your community related to your issue of focus.** Label each node to keep track. Use colors or node symbols to show how organizations differ by focus area, sector, or target audiences.
- **Second, draw lines or arrows between organizations to show their connections.** You can copy the template and make several versions of your map to show how they are connected differently.
- **Third, analyze your map by asking questions.** Who is connected to whom? Where are gaps or opportunities for new connections? How are shared resources, information, and data flowing?
- **Repeat the mapping process regularly.** Track how your ecosystem evolves dynamically over time.



Scan me

Sample Ecosystem Map: Charter School



Ecosystem Mapping Template

Use this template to identify the people, organizations, and communities in your ecosystem and visualize how they are interconnected. Copy and paste the elements below to build your map on the right.

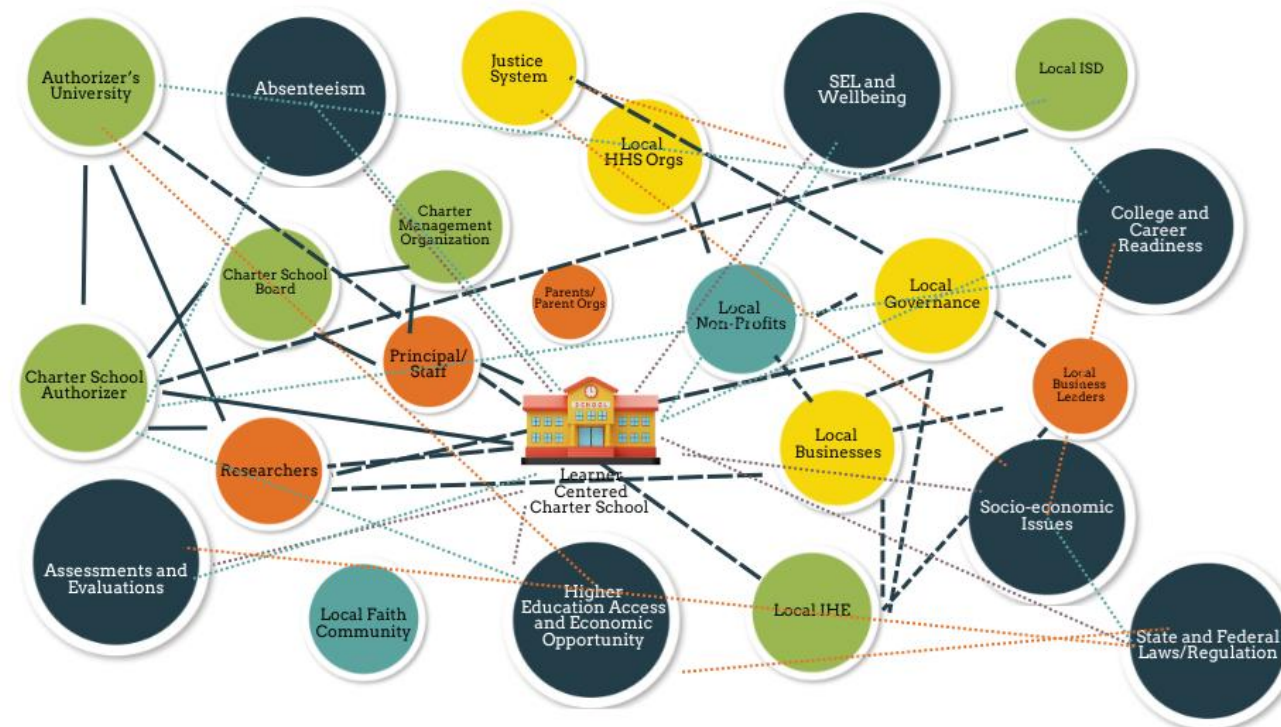
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Ecosystem Mapping Components

Copy & paste these elements to build your map.



Ecosystem Mapping Template courtesy of Visible Network Labs



SAMPLE Ecosystem Map:

Use this section to describe your ecosystem map and share significant takeaways from the mapping process. You can edit the Map Legend on the right with your nodes and lines.

Sample Ecosystem Map Legend

Community Issue	Group-Issue Relationship	Group-Group Relationship	
		Integrating	Coordination
Community Issue	Contributes to Issue	Integrating	Coordination
Education Orgs	Addressing the Issue	Cooperation	Networking
Public Sector Orgs	Affected by the Issue	Aware of Each Other	No Relationship
Community-based Orgs			
People & Sub-populations			



Diving into CI protocols and tools: Ecosystem Mapping

- Ecosystem mapping involves creating a map of the interconnections between all the people, organizations, ideas, and other factors that impact your problem.
 - It can help you understand the interactions between different issues and sectors to find new opportunities for action and impact.
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Lessons Learned

Matt's Key Lessons Learned

- COVET (Communication, Openness, Vulnerability, Experience, and Trust)
- See both the forest and the trees (human experience within systems that we live and work in)

Kristen's Key Lessons Learned

- Anchor partnership work in IS principles (like being user-centered and problem-focused)
- Anchor research into strategic planning and measurement systems with P-12 partners
- Invite diverse array of professionals in the school/university/other organizations into continuous improvement teams



Concluding Remarks

- **Addressing diversity and inclusivity in educational systems requires moving beyond isolated interventions** to embrace practical innovations that leverage P-20 boundary-crossing collaboration, as called for in the 2025 SESI framework for democratic educational transformation.
 - **Higher education access equity cannot be resolved through institution-specific reforms alone**; the evidence demonstrates that system-level approaches coordinating P-20 stakeholders are necessary to achieve the transformational change that research and practice demand.
 - **Continuous improvement methodologies grounded in collaborative P-20 practice offer a viable pathway** for advancing educational equity systemically, warranting further investigation and adaptation across diverse institutional and community contexts.
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What's next

Please keep in touch!

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